

Enhanced and Expanded Title IV-E Waiver Strategies - DCFS

Introduction: The Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Capped Allocation Demonstration Project (Waiver) provides the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) the opportunity to make critical system changes in child welfare services provision. It enables both improved outcomes for children and families; and enhanced social work practice and performance. While the Department has reduced caseloads and the number of youth in out-of-home care, including congregate care; and improved several permanency indicators, DCFS performance on important safety indicators has declined, signaling the need to focus a significant allocation of Waiver reinvestment funds on strategies targeted to improve safety.

The quality and quantity of interactions between social workers, service providers and community are key factors in improving safety, permanency and self-sufficiency. Waiver revenue will be targeted on departmental strategies to improve staff skills and performance, and on expanded co-location of staff from other agencies partnering in child protection and well-being, in order to integrate and coordinate services, enhance access to information, and ensure greater accountability. The most important investment strategies identified to improve DCFS performance are:

- 1) **Social Worker Skill Enhancement:**
 - a) Improved effectiveness in interviewing for and analyzing mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence information from families; and
 - b) Improved Social Worker decision-making, including but not limited to:
 - i) The initial/ongoing assessment of safety and risk throughout the life of a case;
 - ii) Determining the most appropriate placements for children; and
 - iii) Identifying and matching the right services to address the unique needs and challenges of a family.
- 2) **Expansion of qualified, appropriate mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence treatment services**, to be available for immediate access to families upon referral.
- 3) **Expanded capacity of co-located "other" agency staff**, including but not limited to public health nurses, law enforcement investigators, mental health clinicians and County Counsel.
- 4) **Expanded data-driven outcomes management** to consistently improve performance across all regional offices and continually reassess each outcome for the effectiveness of strategies/services that support it.
- 5) **Enhanced preventive in-home supports**
- 6) **Post-permanency supports**

DCFS proposes to target Waiver reinvestment funds toward services that address the following outcomes:

- I. Improved safety
- II. Increased permanency, and
- III. Enhanced self-sufficiency.